



# COMMONWEALTH ACADEMY NEWS

JUNE 2011  
2010-2011, VOLUME III



C/A CLASS OF 2011 (l-r, back row): Alexander Halstead, Lawrence Hayes, Nicholas Walker, Caitlin Moore, Thomas O'Shea (l-r, front row): Nina Pharis, Samuel Laane, Joseph Watson

## Commencement 2011

Celebrations abounded at C/A on June 8th, 9th, and 10th as we held our first Lower School Promotion and applauded as four Lower Schoolers moved up to Middle School; the Class of 2015 graduated from eighth grade and will be welcomed back as High School students in the fall; and the Class of 2011 received their long-awaited High School diplomas and now enjoy their new status as our youngest alumni as they look forward to the next step in their educational journey. See stories beginning on page 2.

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## C/A SUMMER 2011

We're still accepting registration for selected offerings in summer school. Visit [www.CommonwealthAcademy.org](http://www.CommonwealthAcademy.org) for course descriptions and write [Chris\\_Hathaway@CommonwealthAcademy.org](mailto:Chris_Hathaway@CommonwealthAcademy.org) to inquire about registration.

### CONGRATULATIONS TO...

All of our award winners and graduates, particularly the Class of 2011!

Newly inducted Honor Society members (see page 4)

Nathan Zeller for his scouting award (see page 6)

Maria Bayzie whose poem was accepted for publication (see page 6)

CARE Award honorees (see page 7)

Alumni Izac Ross '06 and Matt Fagnoni '09 (see page 16)

# Class of 2011 FAREWELLS



## Alex Halstead

Commonwealth is a great school. I had a glowingly fantastic time every single day I stepped through the doors. All the grades were a complete and utter blast! I loved senior year and it taught me a lot. I also learned from my classmates. "Everything you do is a balloon."



## Lawrence Hayes

I am leaving Commonwealth with the confidence that I know what I can and cannot do. The teachers at Commonwealth listen when you tell them what works for you and then they make those accommodations available to you. "We did not go to the moon because it was easy. We went because it was hard."



## Samuel Laane

If there is one thing I've learned, it's that anyone can succeed if they work for it. Commonwealth helps one rise to the occasion and learn the importance of hard work in achieving success. "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." ~Joseph Patrick Kennedy



## Caitlin Moore

At Commonwealth, a feeling of "something missing" was replaced by a sense of being complete. I thank God for all His blessings, especially my friends, family, and teachers. "We've got each other and that's a lot, For love—we'll give it a shot." ~Bon Jovi, "Livin' on a Prayer."

## HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

**June 10.** "GO DO IT," inspired Trip Howell, former Chair of the Board and keynote speaker at the 2011 Commonwealth Academy commencement exercises. Mr. Howell relayed a personal account of his family's journey through Commonwealth Academy and beseeched graduates to "never forget the teachers that opened the lock." Both Head of School Dr. Susan Johnson and High School Director David Roth delivered personal addresses to the members of the Class of 2011 and their parents, stressing that each of the graduates would similarly never be forgotten for the individual and unique impressions they made during their years at C/A. On behalf of the senior class, Sam Laane thanked Dr. Johnson for "providing a safe and understanding learning environment."

Commencement exercises were held at the George Washington Masonic Memorial.

*This senior class is a unique group. Although small in numbers, they are huge in heart. Always accommodating to others, I found this group of Seniors to be some of the most non-judgmental, flexible, and overall happy class we've had in years. They truly would just 'go with the flow'. In brainstorming what to say about each of them, I found one word that came to mind about each Senior. . . Joseph~Curious. . .Caitlin ~Kind. . . Nick~Authentic. . .Alex ~Saavy . . . Lawrence~Matured. . .Thomas~Diligent . . .Sam~Accomplished. . .Nina~Caring . . . Each personality trait mentioned is unique, remarkable and wonderful . . .You may be leaving Commonwealth Academy, but the legacies and memories you have left behind will last."*

DAVID ROTH, HIGH SCHOOL DIRECTOR

## CLASS OF 2011 COLLEGE CHOICES

### ALEX HALSTEAD

Columbia College

### LAWRENCE HAYES

Marshall University

### SAM LAANE

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

### CAITLIN MOORE

Undecided

### THOMAS O'SHEA

Undecided

### NINA PHARIS

Marymount University

### NICK WALKER

High Point University

### JOSEPH WATSON

Bowie State University

This year's C/A graduates were also accepted to:

Arizona State University

Capitol University

Five Towns College

George Mason University

Point Park University

Purdue University

Rensselaer Polytechnic  
Institute

Shenandoah University

The Catholic University of  
America

University of Colorado  
Boulder

University of Maryland

University of the District of  
Columbia

University of Wisconsin at  
Milwaukee

Virginia Commonwealth  
University

Virginia Tech

*Seniors earned a total of \$208,400 in scholarships over four years, including a DC grant for Marshall University's H.E.L.P. program that provides support for students with AD/HD or specific learning disabilities. This is the first time a grant has been awarded for this type of program.*



### Thomas O'Shea

My advice to the upcoming 12th graders is to enjoy their next year as much as possible because when you're finished there is no coming back. I would like to thank my teachers for teaching me everything I have learned. "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing." ~Helen Keller



### Nina Pharis

Commonwealth has been a blessing for me. My seven years here have prepared me for college and what lies ahead. I thank everyone at Commonwealth for helping me know that I can succeed at anything I put my mind to.



### Nick Walker

I came here my sophomore year expecting to hate it because I was leaving friends and a comfortable environment behind, only to find Commonwealth had much more to offer. I have made great friends, had a fantastic time, and learned more than I would care to admit. Farewell.



### Joseph Watson

Learning becomes infinitely easier if you can find some sort of interest in whatever it is that you're learning about. Even though work ethic is important, you should always make time for relaxation. On a more personal note, overall I have enjoyed my time at Commonwealth.



## National Honor Society

Commonwealth Academy inducted another class of juniors and seniors into the National Honor Society on June 1. These students all exhibit the outstanding qualities of scholarship, character, leadership, and service that the NHS was founded upon and its members continue to represent. This year's inductees are (l-r): **Samuel Curtis '12**, **Jennifer George '12**, **Elliot Katz '12**, and **Kelsey Schaefer '12**, and (not pictured) **Samuel Laane '11** and **Kathryn O'Connor '12**.

## High School Awards



### ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

*Mastery:* Jenny George '12, Sam Laane '11

*Excellence:* Tunc Edmonds '14

*Effort and Improvement:* Maria Bayzie '13, Laura Hanson '14, Alex Marnell '14

### WRITING

*Excellence:* Jenny George '12, Taylor Lavelle '13, Peter Szymanoski '14

*Effort and Improvement:* Kathryn O'Connor '12, Machijah Persaud '13, Dominique Herbert '14



### HISTORY

*Superior Achievement:* Brendan McAuliffe '13, Sebastien Hopkinson '12

*Exceptional Effort:* Joey Keller '13

*Most Significant Improvement:* Keith Mullins '13

### SCIENCE

*Superior Achievement:* Michael Williams '13, Sebastien Hopkinson '12

*Exceptional Effort:* Maria Bayzie '13, Stephanie Lemberg '12

### MATH

*Superior Achievement:* Sam Laane '11

*Effort & Improvement:* Natalie Gerdano '13, Will Heppner '12



### SPANISH

*Superior Achievement:* Danny Wang '13, Jenny George '12

*Effort & Improvement:* Nathan Zeller '13

### P.E.

*Excellence and Achievement:* Conor Powell '13

*Effort & Improvement:* Brendan McAuliffe '13

### ART

*Best Artist:* Craig Strasbourger '12, Julia Zeigler '12

*Most Creative Artist:* Kelsey Schaefer '12, Stephanie Lemberg '12



### COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD

Joey Keller '13 (107.5 hrs), Sam Curtis '12 (61.25 hrs), Michael Williams '13 (18.5 hrs), Sam Laane '11 (18.5 hrs), *summer:* Caitlin Moore '11 (90 hrs), Chris O'Connor '13 (54 hrs), Katie Wood '13 (40 hrs)

### SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF HONORS REQUIREMENT

*United States/Virginia History:* Craig Strasbourger '12, Will Heppner '12

*Spanish 3:* Jenny George '12

*United States/Virginia Government:* Sam Laane '11



**EIGHTH GRADE GRADUATES:** (Back row, l-r): Collin Lyle, Ned Goodnow, Sergey O'Neill, Marina Pharis, Cole Miller (Middle row, l-r): Nathan Hornberger, Jared Kleiman, Ryan Lucas, Sarah Keyser (Front row, l-r): Juliet Landeck, Jordan Wright, Hilary Kraus, Alison Rowan (Not pictured): Sam Greulich, Phillip Little

## MIDDLE SCHOOL AWARDS

### Dean's Award

Cole Miller '15  
 Kyle Schwartz '16  
 Rachel Skopp-Cardillo '16  
 Jordan Wright '15  
 Colin Zack '17

### Community Service Award

Carolyn Coveney '17  
 Lee Keller '16

### Sportsmanship Award

Cat Higgins '17  
 Colin Zack '17

### Most Improved Student

Parker Allen '17  
 Sarah Keyser '15

### Best Academic Performers

6th Grade: Gabby Stevenson '17  
 7th Grade: Jakob Coray '16  
 8th Grade: Hilary Kraus '15

## MIDDLE SCHOOL GRADUATION

**June 9.** The Middle School graduation celebrated the tremendous accomplishments of the Class of 2015. Heart-felt and intimate, the graduation included teacher remarks about each eighth grade student, highlighting great classroom stories, unforgettable memories, and personal well-wishes. Middle School Director Matt Johns addressed the Class of 2015 with great affection as he brought to life the strengths and contributions of the class. The North Lodge of the George Washington Masonic Memorial was packed with parents, family members, friends, and fellow classmates, capping off what was a wonderful ceremony.

*“What I love about you, Class of 2015, is that consistently throughout the year, you included everyone... regardless of their personal interest, grade, gender, or computing preference. You shared your jokes, you invited people into your plans, and you made those around you feel welcomed and appreciated. As you leave, I trust that your younger classmates have seen that and will carry on in your footsteps.”* MATT JOHNS, MIDDLE SCHOOL DIRECTOR



## LOWER SCHOOL PROMOTION

**June 8.** The paparazzi were out in full force as students, parents, and faculty gathered in the multi-purpose room for C/A's first Lower School Promotion and Awards Ceremony. Four students, pictured above, left to right, with teachers Maria Brinza and Jane Furey, were promoted to 6th grade: **Thomas Masseide, Jack Brunton, William Egge, and Garrett Crerar.**



Students performed a puppet theater production, “*The Wizard of Oz*.” In addition to writing the script for this original show, they created the puppets and sets, calling on their skills in writing, math, art, and even the knowledge they acquired in a science unit on fossil fuels, green energy, and rockets—Dorothy uses a solar car created by the students to return to Kansas.

## LOWER SCHOOL AWARDS

### Curricular Awards

*Art:* Thomas Maaseide '18

*CogMed:* Andrei Thompson '19

*Math:* William Egge '18

*Reading:* Hazel Feldstein '20

*Science:* Jackson Brunton '18,  
Ewan O'Donnell '20

*Social Studies:* Will Roellke '19

*Visual Thinking & Strategy:*  
Thomas Maaseide '18

*Writing:* Garrett Crerar '18

*Most Improved Student:*  
Ewan O'Donnell '20

### Citizenship Awards

*Group Leadership:* Will Roellke '19

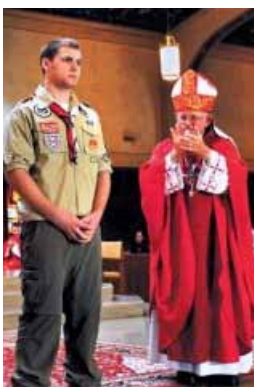
*Most Caring Student:*  
Ewan O'Donnell '20

*Good Citizen:* Thomas Maaseide '18

*Good Sportsmanship:* Will Roellke '19

## AROUND C/A

### ZELLER EARNS TOP SCOUTING AWARD



Life Scout **Nathan Zeller '13**, BSA Troop 717, standing next to Arlington Bishop Paul S. Loverde, recently received the Pope Pius XII Award,

the highest ecumenical recognition available to Catholic Boy Scouts. This award involves a year of activities dealing with different life choices, occupations, and ministries as well as service to the community. The Bishop applauded Nathan and other award recipients at the 30th annual Scout

Mass celebrated at the Cathedral of St. Thomas More in Arlington. Afterwards, the Scouts had the opportunity to speak with the Bishop during the Scout Reception. Nathan is currently working on a community conservation project that will fulfill the final requirements for the rank of Eagle Scout.

### BAYZIE TO BE PUBLISHED



“War,” an original poem by **Maria Bayzie '13**, was selected from thousands of entries by Creative

Communication to be published in *A Celebration of Poets*, an anthology of student poetry. Creative Communications sponsors several student-writing contests throughout

the year; teachers and educators judge the submissions. To order a copy of the anthology, or to learn more about upcoming contests, visit [www.poeticpower.com](http://www.poeticpower.com).

### WAR

*Maria Bayzie*

I pray as I am in danger  
The loud shots flying through the air  
I pray that I might make it  
As bombs stir up my ground  
I pray to my Lord to save me  
As men run toward me  
I pray for my family  
As the shots get closer  
I pray to save my life  
As the bombs get stronger  
I pray as the men come closer and closer  
I look to the sky as a big bright stream of light awaits me  
I close my eyes and I am gone

# CARE Dinner Salutes Outstanding Educators

Hosted once again by C/A former parents, **James Carville and Mary Matalin**, the 11th Annual CARE Awards featured, as always, some of the most talented and creative educators in our region. Keynote speakers and recipients of the CARE Leadership Award **Bill Ritchie** and **Andrea Barthello** spoke about their company, ThinkFUN, located here in Alexandria. ThinkFUN is an educational games and puzzles developer and manufacturer, founded by the couple to, “translate the brilliant ideas of the craziest mathematicians, engineers, and inventors into simple toys that can be appreciated by boys and girls around the world.” This deceptively simple mission has blossomed over the past 25 years into a well-respected global company, active in 60 countries and translated into over 20 languages! C/A uses ThinkFUN materials in our Visual Thinking and Strategy Lab for lower and middle school children. C/A again extends its thanks and congratulations to these two dedicated, talented, warm, and creative people.

**Mayor William Euille** presented the CARE Award for an Alexandria Public school teacher to **Ms. Mercedes Huffman**, co-director of the math center at TC Williams High School. She works with students of all levels, with a special emphasis on using individualized methods to appropriately meet the learning needs of each student.

Department chair and science teacher **Katie Theobald** was tapped as the C/A Teacher of the Year for her outstanding work as a teacher and mentor to our high school students. Just one example of her dedication to excellence was her leadership role in The Great American Energy Debate. As a lifelong learner, Ms. Theobald will earn her masters in science education this summer and will serve as project coordinator in Thailand for a five-week high school program, The Plight of the Thai Elephant.

Also honored were seven C/A alumni who have now—empowered with a C/A education and through their own fortitude and determination—graduated from a four-year college program. Receiving the recognition of C/A Achiever were: **Steven Buoni '04, Lily Stejskal '04, Marshall Braden '05, J.R. Clark '05, Daniel Dewey-Vogt '05, Brian Dooley '06, Barnaby Katz '06**. Their accomplishments are an affirmation of the C/A program in readying them to achieve at the highest levels of education. We thank them and congratulate them on their hard work and wonderful results.

The CARE Awards Dinner is C/A's largest annual fundraiser. This year the event netted over \$60,000 thanks in large part to record participation of C/A families, as well as continuing and increasing support from area-wide business leaders and friends. Many thanks go to our loyal sponsors and to our 2011 CARE Dinner Committee: Chairs, Sophia and Dean Marnell, Trish Donilon, Gena Fitzgerald, John Hazard, Deana Herbert, Pat Laane, Stacey Nadeau, Cathy Pharis, and Corinne Winburn.



Co-chairs Sophia and Dean Marnell, pictured here with Mary Matalin and James Carville, brought great energy, creativity, and leadership to the 2011 CARE Awards, raising awareness of the event both within the school and the business community. In the spirit of inclusivity and community, Sophia walked the carline and sent robocalls, personally inviting each C/A parent to attend.



(l-r) Board Chair Cathy Pharis; keynote speakers and CARE Leadership Award recipients Andrea Barthello and Bill Ritchie, cofounders of ThinkFun; Head of School Dr. Susan J. Johnson



CARE Awardee Mercedes Huffman with Alexandria Mayor William Euille



C/A Teacher of the Year Katie Theobald with Head of School Dr. Susan J. Johnson



## David Roth Represents C/A at Local Education Conference

As a leading premier school in the field of learning differences, C/A was invited by the Weinfeld Education Group to participate

in their March program “Diamonds in the Rough: Special Learning Needs Sampler.” High School Director **David Roth** joined representatives of three other area schools in a panel discussion about cutting edge educational programs that exemplify excellence in meeting the needs of bright students with learning differences.

The audience of approximately 70 parents, lingered long after the session to ask Mr. Roth additional questions about C/A and about how to choose the right school environment for their child. Mr. Roth suggested that parents always take an honest look at their child’s strengths and weaknesses, then investigate the school’s mission and the tangible ways in which it fulfills its mission. Mr. Roth also recommended that parents visit many schools while the students are in session. “Observing students in action, while experiencing firsthand the energy of the school,” says Mr. Roth, “will give you a solid measure to judge the right environment for your child.”

contributed pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters and dollar bills to their class bucket to earn points for their grade. Pennies were counted as positive points while all other monetary contributions earned negative points. The class with the most positive points earned an additional 100 team points toward the overall competition. Together, the students raised \$913.75. Seventh graders won the overall competition and were treated to breakfast at IHOP, courtesy of the MS-SGA.



## LOWER SCHOOLERS “ADOPT” BABY LION CUBS

Donating money they raised from a bake sale, Lower Schoolers voted to participate in the National Zoo’s Adopt a Species Program and are now the proud sponsors of four baby lion cubs. In addition to helping the animal kingdom, the bake sale gave students in grades 3–5 an opportunity to practice math skills by baking and making change, use descriptive writing making signs and menus, and practice social skills, interacting with their C/A customers. A little bit of sugar does indeed go a long way!



## In the Spirit MS RAISES OVER \$900 FOR JAPAN

Middle schoolers displayed their school spirit, and competitive drive, for five days in April during the SGA sponsored “Spirit Week.” Each day required students to dress according to theme: C/A Day, Sports Day, Career Day, Mismatch Day, and Color Day. The competition extended to humanitarian spirit as well: the Penny Wars raged throughout the week in an effort to raise money for survivors of the earthquake and tsunami in Japan. Students

## MR. JOHNS’ TRUE TO HIS WORD

More than two-thirds of C/A Middle Schoolers joined 11 courageous teachers on April 29 for the annual Middle School Lock-In... an overnight extravaganza of games, food, movies, and little sleep. Highlights included a huge game of Capture the Football, an amazing obstacle course and scavenger hunt created by **Mr. Conroy**, making a small-group silent movie, and a series of Minute-to-Win-It games. Undoubtedly the most enjoyable moment, however, was cashing in on **Mr. Johns’** promise to shave his head if the Middle School



raised \$800 in the Penny War competition held during Spirit Week. They did and Mr. Johns kept his word, as evidenced by this photo.



Thanks to all volunteers who made Café Night possible, including (l-r): Cathy Greulich, Allison Gurnitz (Chair), Lauren Szymanoski, Alethea Haas, Karen Keller, Vicki Coward, Meredith Legg, and Terri O'Connor.

## “Café Night at the Casbah” with CAPA

On May 7, Over 70 parents, teachers, and administrators attended Café Night at the Casbah, an overwhelmingly successful social and fundraising event organized by CAPA.

The Casbah theme was evident at every turn: the multipurpose room was transformed into a gold- and red-draped Arabian fantasy complete with a tented beverage station, palm trees and two life-sized “camels.” Traditional décor adorned the tables and delicious Mediterranean cuisine was served to strains of popular and traditional themed music. Over 70 opportunities were also to be had at the silent auction, 50/50 raffle, and C/A staff raffle. A giving tree, monetary contributions, and an impromptu fundraising opportunity provided by Dr. Johnson all contributed to raising over \$13,000 which will be used to supplement our educational program and equipment in support of all C/A students.



Head of School Dr. Susan Johnson confers with the Casbah's camel.



English teacher Case Anderson wins the Wintergreen Resort basket.

## DR. JOHNSON, MR. ROTH SPEAK AT INDEPENDENT EDUCATION CONFERENCE



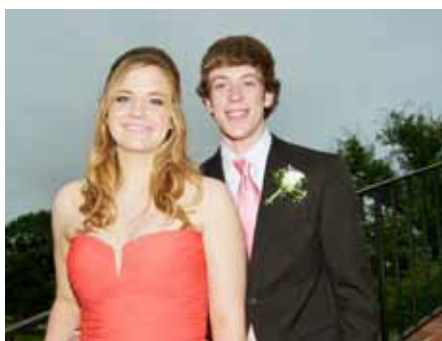
An all-day Learning Differences Conference for both learning specialists and non-specialist teachers

and administrators was held at the Madeira School on April 6. Dr. Johnson presented a workshop, “Can’t or Won’t” to help educators better understand the difference between students with low motivation and those that are unable to meet educational expectations the way they are set up. As schools enroll students with LD and AD/HD, it is the responsibility of the administration and the individual teacher, she explained, to provide the environment that incorporates differentiated instruction, accommodations, and compensatory strategies.

The workshop, held in both the morning and afternoon, helped attendees answer these questions: *Are your struggling middle school and high school students being typical teenagers or do they have AD/HD? Executive functioning deficits? Are your students unmotivated or learning disabled?* Dr. Johnson also presented strategies and practical approaches to help recognize when students are struggling due to an unidentified learning disability, AD/HD, or Executive Functioning. She explored developmental considerations for ages 8-18 and presented an overview of executive functioning deficits and Learning Disabilities. To help educators “walk in the shoes” of an LD student, Mr. Roth used interactive demonstrations on the SmartBoard, leading a simulation activity to demonstrate what it’s like to be dyslexic and dysgraphic.

The conference was developed by Independent Education in conjunction with the Learning Differences Advisory Committee of which Dr. Johnson is a member.

## Junior Senior Prom



Juniors, Seniors, and their dates, enjoyed an evening of dancing, food, and Hollywood-themed celebration at this year's prom. Thanks go to Ms. Theobald, Mr. Roth, Ms. Harris-Nicholls, Ms. Pharis, and Mr. Apol, who helped decorate or chaperone the wonderful party.



### KELLER, HAMMERMAN ATTEND LEADERSHIP BREAKFAST

On April 12, **Jason Hammerman '16** and **Lee Keller '16** joined representatives from 36 other schools at the Middle School Student Leadership Breakfast, sponsored by the Parent Council of Washington (PCW). The breakfast is modeled on the PCW's signature program for high school students and provides a forum for middle school students to discuss social and developmental issues relevant to today's youngest teens, such as social status, self-image, stress, technology and media, and communication with family. This forum also serves as a way to gather information about the perspective and concerns of area students and to convey this information directly and anonymously to their schools and parents. Lee and Jason were selected to attend because of their consistent display of leadership and their academic, social, and extracurricular success as students.



**SGA ELECTIONS.** Congratulations to incoming High School SGA officers **Michael Williams '13**, Vice President, pictured left, and **Conor Powell '13**, President, pictured right, who will serve during the 2011-12 academic year. Students will elect the remaining SGA officers and class representatives in September. Middle School students will also elect SGA representatives in September.



**MANY THANKS** to all the CAPA volunteers who made innumerable events possible this year by providing transportation, food, decorations, chaperoning, leadership and good cheer. Pictured above are just two of the parents we applaud: **Karen Keller and Alethea Haas** above (aka Ethel and Lucy), who provided food and flowers, and both set-up clean-up after the entire 2010-11 C/A Speaker Series.

## Middle School Performing Arts

This spring, drama students performed two brief, original skits for the middle school and a 40-minute play, *Frankenstein Slept Here*, on the afternoon of June 7. The cast included **Carolyn Coveney '17**, **Harry Coward '16**, **Sam Gotter '16**, **Sam Gruelich '15**, **Jason Hammerman '16**, **Sarah Keyser '15**, **Hilary Kraus '15**, **Susie Laane '17**, **Cole Miller '15**, **Katya Nelson '16**, **Lwazi Rennert '16**, **Gabby Stevenson '17**, and **Zoe Winter '17**. **Ms. Litvak's** art class created scenery, props, and costumes.

As the cast rehearsed for the production, they reflected on the live drama and production techniques they witnessed at Toby's Youth Theater in Columbia where the entire Middle School saw a performance of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Often a summer reading selection, the performance deepened their understanding of life during World War II from a unique perspective.

## Annual Luau and High School Art and Poetry Show

The High School's Art & Poetry Show, held on May 20 in conjunction with the annual Luau, is a great culmination of a semester that focuses on creative writing and poetry in Writing class, as well as the exploration of numerous media and styles in Studio Art. Against a backdrop of artwork hung around the multipurpose room and displayed in a slide show, students shared and celebrated their poems. Feeling confident in their public speaking and enjoying the encouragement of and safety offered by their peers, they expressed their personal thoughts and ideas in a variety of genres ranging from sonnets and love poems to concrete poetry and spoken word. Creative writing, and particularly poetry, offer students the chance to critically consider both the world around them and how they fit in that world. For example, **Peter Szymanoski '14** created a great Xtranormal video to present his poem entitled "Tahrir Square" about the recent protests in Egypt. **Ben Barton '13** gave a rousing reading of his poem "The Grove" which struck an eerie note reminiscent of Edgar Allen Poe. And **Danny Wang '13** earned a number of laughs with his poem about the need for exercise in America and the problem with Americans being overweight.

An all high-school event, **Rich Reyes'** music class introduced the readings with songs including "Here Comes the Sun" and "Desire." The SGA provided decorations and assisted faculty with set up and clean up, and CAPA prepared and served a fabulous luau feast including burgers, delicious sorbets in coconut shells and fruit, and C/A's special decaf coffee treat: Nesquik, decaf coffee, chocolate syrup, and whipped cream. Music and luau games continued through the afternoon.



### IN THE CLASSROOM



## Middle School Mural

Using the wall-length white board in Mr. VanderClute's room, Middle School students created a mural based on the novel *When You Reach Me*, by Rebecca Stead. Students used dry-erase markers, paper, and colored pencils to create the Manhattan neighborhood depicted in the book.

# Student Workshops

A series of student workshops on important issues were presented at C/A this year between March 1 and May 2 to Middle and High School students, to help provide tools to make healthy decisions. Specific topics were decided upon by the administration team based on issues that arose during the year. The following rules for making healthy decisions were applicable to all topics:

- 1) Look at long-term vs. short-term consequences
- 2) Make conscious choices
  - Decide the next step
  - Don't just let things happen
  - Take control of the situation
- 3) Know who is making your decisions

Topics included: Team Building (6th and 7th graders); Diversity Training (9th and 10th graders); Healthy Relationships (8th-10th graders); Appropriate Use of Social Media (8th-12th graders); Bullying/Harrassment Awareness (9th-10th graders); Substance Abuse (9th-12th graders); and Managing Prescription Drugs and Substances (11th-12th graders).

Workshops were presented by a variety of experts including: Jewish Social Services, Andrea LoBalbo, LCSW, Andrew McGahan, George Young of the National Counseling Group, and Dr. Clifford Sussman.

The workshops are one example of how C/A and parents can partner together to educate our students for success in life. The workshop was suggested by Sophia Marnell (Alex '14), CEO of Alexton Inc. Many thanks also go to Alexton Inc. for generously funding the program.



## Sassy Spanish Salsa & More

Culinary competitions and other projects are just one way Department Chair Mary Chamberlain uses food to fire up interest in Spanish and help students master the language on their way to fluency. Culinary projects encourage vocabulary development, provide a casual atmosphere to encourage dialogue, and bring the Hispanic culture into the classroom.



In Spanish 1 this year, students made tortillas in class, tying into a unit on food and practical vocabulary needed to order in a restaurant. They enjoyed using the tortilla press, but also found it surprisingly difficult to get a perfectly shaped tortilla. Spanish 2 students enjoy the annual Salsa Making Competition, in which they find or create a recipe, shop for the ingredients,

make it, and present it to a panel of judges. Spanish 3 took a field trip to La Tasca in March where they tried a variety of typical Spanish dishes and learned more about Spanish food and the origin of tapas from the restaurant's manager.

C/A offers Spanish 1 through Spanish 4 honors. One way students measure their progress each year is by using an audio portfolio. One of the goals of our program is for students to *learn how* to learn a language; study skills are embedded in the curriculum. Studying Spanish helps students prepare for life in a global society and gives them a better understanding of English grammar and vocabulary.

## MIDDLE SCHOOL SCIENCE FAIR

Middle Schoolers demonstrated their understanding of the scientific method during the annual Science Fair, held on May 26 for 8th graders and June 1 for 6th and 7th graders. Parents enjoyed hearing about each project as students presented a PowerPoint explaining their hypotheses, data, and conclusions.





## MIDDLE SCHOOL GEOGRAPHERS CLIMB MT. EVEREST

Experiential learning opportunities abound on field trips, but are also present within the walls of C/A. Middle School students recently used school supplies and the building in a series of experiential learning exercises about Mt. Everest. First, they identified with the sherpa porters who had to carry various articles of luggage from the airport to base camp, often a week long trek. They imagined the dangers of the Khumbu Icefall and learned how ladders and crampons are integral to scaling ice seracs and crossing fissures. As the students continued to “climb the mountain,” they appreciated the need for acclimatization, supplemental oxygen, and conservation. The week-long lesson ended with students summiting Mt. Everest and placing their flag on the peak for all to see.

## Animal Unit Frames Learning in Lower School

A visit to the Baltimore Aquarium launched a Lower School animal unit that helped students sharpen reading, writing, and technology skills. The extensive shark tank with live divers was a highlight of the visit and the perfect prelude to reading the nonfiction book *Sharks* back at school. Through this reading, students practiced including identifying main ideas and details, fact vs. opinion, and writing chapter summaries.

Students were also assigned a PowerPoint research project on an animal of their choosing. They used both print and internet resources to complete their research and created amazing reports, often working during lunch and free time. For most students this was their first experience with PowerPoint and they embraced it. “After I learned to edit PowerPoints in 3D, it was awesome,” exclaimed one student. In writing their PowerPoints, Lower Schoolers practiced concepts of clear

writing including: write only those words that you understand, keep sentences and phrases clear and short, use capital letters and punctuation to help your reader understand what you are trying to say, and most of all, care about your topic. (They also learned an important lesson we all know: save and back up your document!!)

During the course of the PowerPoint project, Lower Schoolers also visited the National Zoo, paying special attention to how the Zoo displayed signs and information about their animals. They learned that most of the animals at the zoo are endangered or in vulnerable status. That understanding was reflected in their choice of animals to research as well so it was no surprise when they chose the Zoo to be the recipient of their bake sale proceeds.



Some fun facts the Lower Schoolers shared with us include:

“The dad skunk is not really a good parent because it tries to eat the baby skunks. The skunk can only spray 6 times, and it takes two weeks to generate more spray once it is out of spray.”

“The freshwater stingray has only a population of 83 in the whole world and only exists in the Amazon River, or at least it has only been sighted there at this point.”

“Crocodiles reproduce in the wet season laying up to 60 eggs at a time, but when they hatch only a few survive.”

“The Red Panda is closely related to raccoons and also closely related to the giant panda. In mid June to late July females give birth to 1 to 4 blind and deaf cubs.”

As a culminating activity, students presented their PowerPoints to an enthralled audience of parents, faculty, and peers...then celebrated their success with an ice cream social.

## Senior Internships

Seniors gained valuable experience in the “working world” when they participated in two-week internships at local businesses and nonprofit organizations during May. Understanding their interests and learning styles, seniors were able to select a mentor organization, make valuable contributions, and make lasting contacts in the metro area. At the conclusion of the internship, students shared their experience with their peers and faculty using a PowerPoint presentation. Following are the internships for the members of the Class of 2011:

Alex Halstead	Lowell School—Kindergarten teacher assistant
Lawrence Hayes	Ward 5 Council Office—administrative office support and research
Sam Laane	Paralyzed Veterans of America—Help Desk intern
Caitlin Moore	Mount Vernon, Hands-on-History—Guest Services intern
Thomas O’Shea	Lincolnia Adult Day Health Care Center—interacting with participants
Nina Pharis	Rock Creek Park Horse Center—teacher assistant and horse care
Nick Walker	Hodgson Consulting—web development
Joseph Watson	Office of the Chief Technology Officer, DC Government—computers, outreach, training



**HIGH SCHOOL BIOLOGY STUDENTS STUDY MARINE LIFE DURING SMITH ISLAND FIELD TRIP.**



## Seniors Fantastic Finish: Four Days in Orlando

The Class of 2011 spent four action-packed days in Orlando, remembering their time together at C/A, and creating new memories to take with them to college. Accompanied by Jennifer McAuliffe and Case Anderson, the graduating class visited various theme parks including Universal Studios, Islands of Adventure, Sea World, and the Aquatica Water Park. They also enjoyed time at Downtown Disney, City Walk at Universal Studios, and poolside at the hotel. While having fun, they were (perhaps unknowingly!) learning lessons in being independent while accountable to a group, and sharpening their planning and time management skills.

### FIELD TRIPS

## War Stories

Stepped in classroom learning about the Cold War, World History II students walked through decades of conflict when they visited the World War II, Korean, and Vietnam memorials, sharpening their understanding about how one war led to another. Later, the students delved deeper into World War II, visiting the Holocaust Museum, and hearing a firsthand account of life during the 1930s and 1940s from a Holocaust survivor. Afterwards, each student adopted the persona of a Holocaust survivor, answered questions about his/her experiences, and wrote a summary of his/her life. The activity underscored the atrocities of the war and the importance of human rights and freedoms in today’s global society.



## CREATIVE WRITING AT THE AMERICAN ART MUSEUM

After a docent-led tour through the American Art Museum, Middle School students wrote a short story using a portrait and landscape exhibit of their choice. The short story required use of each stage of the writing process and a detailed plot diagram graphic organizer. They learned more about the exhibits through small group Q&A sessions and a scavenger hunt.



## JUNIORS TRAVEL TO RICHMOND AND CHARLOTTESVILLE

Juniors taking US/VA History toured the Virginia Capitol and Governor's Mansion to augment their study about the history of their state and the creation of our nation. During a mock-session on the floor of the Virginia House of Delegates, students introduced, debated, and passed a bill to ban cellular phone use in automobiles in Virginia, gaining firsthand experience about what it's like to debate a bill and garner support on the House floor. They also saw college life firsthand during a tour of the UVA campus and spoke with an admission representative to learn more about what colleges are looking for in applicants. The trip ended with a tour of Monticello and the Michie Tavern where students learned more about Thomas Jefferson and gained a greater understanding of what life was like in the early 1800s, including some of the inventions of the era that we see evidence of in today's modern technology.

## Seniors Explore Role of an Individual in Society

In March, seniors traveled to the Woolly Mammoth Theater to see Mike Daisey perform in *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*, a show that tells the tale of business magnate and Apple CEO Steve Jobs as he battles to play a leading role in defining technology's grip on American and even global culture, and one that asks the fundamental question about what it means to be an individual in society. Can an individual take a stand in a society that is blind to the injustices permeating its waters? Daisey's monologue illuminates the ultimate price we pay for technology, exposing the human rights violations all too present in the south-China factory city of Shenzhen where many of Apple's products are produced. At the same time, it emphasized that change occurs through individual acts and the perseverance of hope. The stunning finale implored theatergoers to take a stand if they believed in the production's message and students engaged in a lively debate over the true meaning and message of the play, and reconsidered some of their own views while riding back to C/A.

The play related directly to several of the books students had previously read, including Orwell's *1984* and Huxley's *Brave New World* and on another level, serves as a transition to *Hamlet*, a story in which an individual's lack of response to a pressing moral dilemma leads to his ultimate demise. Just as important, it gave students the opportunity to learn firsthand about an issue that affects them and their fellow citizens directly, rather than interpreting the messages transmitted through a novel from the past to understand today's world better.

## American Lit at Arena Stage

Arena Stage's production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* provided juniors in American Literature with a visual representation of American drama. Prior to attending the April production at the newly-renovated theater complex, students learned about the life and work of Edward Albee as well as the historical and cultural significance of this American classic. The play's characters and themes served as a bridge between two of the course's readings. Students compared and contrasted the tragic female leads of Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Martha in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.

Albee's play was a response to the 'phony' and superficially idyllic life of 1950s America, a theme students will again see as they read J.D. Salinger's *A Catcher in the Rye*, which deals with the phoniness of suburban America and the emergence of the rebellious teenager.

## Spring Ushers in New C/A Teams



Wednesday clubs served as practice sessions for two new competitive sports at C/A: tennis and flag football. **Mr. Conroy** coached the team and took them to two matches, one against Field School on May 12, and the second against Capital City Charter School on May 19. The team played very well. Evan Patterson '13 won his singles match against Field and **Mitchell Hazard '13** and **Tyler Rodriguez '13** were winning their doubles match 3-0 against Field when the match was called due to time. Other team members included **Alex Marnell '14**, **Nathan Zeller '13**, and **Julia Zeigler '12**.

Meanwhile, **Mr. Brown**, **Mr. Anderson**, and **Mr. Henneberg** coached C/A's first flag football team. The first game was scheduled against the Chelsea school, which C/A won by forfeit.

On May 25, the British School overpowered C/A 30-21, but our team played hard and well. Team members included quarterback **Mike Griffin '13**; running backs **Harry Coward '16**, **Dominique Herbert '14**, and **Lwazi Rennert '16**; and wide receivers **Chris Donilon '14**, **Aiko Igasaki '13**, **Brendan McAuliffe '13**, **Kyle Pizzini '13**, **Michael Williams '13**, and **Colin Zach '17**.



## ADMISSIONS

Enrollment numbers and retention rates are at an all time high, while new student enrollment numbers exceed those of last year at this time. Our Lower School program had a wonderful year and to cap it off, all of our lower school students will return next year.

We do still have limited spaces available for 2011-12 academic year. If you're a returning family and haven't already submitted your enrollment contract, please do so immediately. If you have any friends or family members who are considering C/A, please encourage them to contact Admission Director Josh Gwilliam.

**IZAC ROSS '06** was selected by his department chair and faculty to receive the Outstanding Achievement Award during the 2011 Commencement ceremony at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Izac has been on the Dean's List for four years, has published and presented, and was the only undergraduate to compete in an international student interaction competition in which he was the runner up. He has also enjoyed successful internships in DC, NY, and MA since graduating from C/A. Izac finished his last two courses online while working at Philips Design in Andover, MA and flew to the Netherlands after graduation to discuss the creation of a new design group based in Eindhoven.

Izac's mother, Lori Milstein recently wrote to Dr. Johnson, "I am truly grateful for your belief in Izac, and the preparation that he received at Commonwealth." You can read more about Izac's numerous accomplishments at [www.izacross.com](http://www.izacross.com).

**MATT FAGNONI '09** accepted membership in The National Society of Collegiate Scholars (NSCS) and will be honored this fall at an induction ceremony at NOVA. NSCS is the nation's only interdisciplinary honors organization for first- and second-year college students. Membership is by invitation only, based on grade-point average and class standing and provides students with opportunities for career and networking, scholarships, travel, and service projects.



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